**Report on the Synod of the Archdeaconry of France and Monaco**

**Lyon 16-18 May 2019**

**Present**  The Archdeacon, 27 priests, 59 chaplaincy representatives

**Guests and observers** : Pasteur Pierre Blanzat, Eglise Protestante Unie de France, and the Very Reverend Lucinda Laird, Dean of the American Cathedral of Paris

**Introduction**

This year Synod met at the Domaine de St Joseph a former Roman Catholic Seminary on the outskirts of the Lyon. Bishop Robert who had been expected to attend was unable to do so at the last moment due to a unexpected meeting, so he sent a message via video.

Synod is always a time when one receives a great deal of information - and this time it was all packed into less than two days.

**Bible Study and Services**

Brother Matthew from the Taize community took two Bible studies based on passages from St Matthew and Philippians, focusing on mission, reconciliation and thankfulness. In line with the usual “Taize formula” the leader read the Bible passage very carefully twice and gave some pointers on the text. We then broke into groups to discuss the passage and its implications. In order to prevent one just opting for a group with one’s friends people were divided up according to their birth month. (This misfired with the Strasbourg contingent, all of whom have birthdays in April.)

During the Synod there were three eucharists, two services of Morning Prayer and one of Evening Prayer which was beautifully led by Ozichi. Mark was responsible for the chalice at one of the Eucharists.

**Session 1 Introduction and Welcome**

After welcoming us and some brief household information the Archdeacon looked at a question which had been concerning him since his appointment - the degree to which conflict was evident in a number of chaplaincies. He began by looking at some of the underlying factors:

* problems had arisen when chaplaincies had formulated their own constitutions and moved away from the constitutional framework and requirements of the Diocese. This can lead to misunderstanding on the roles and responsibilities of certain parties;
* the fact that in France all chaplaincies are also bound by both ecclesiastical law and the law of the land. The implications of this duality are not always understood;
* relations with the Chaplaincy Council who are responsible for the stipend, and thus regarded as the employer under French employment law, can also be strained;
* chaplains and chaplaincies sometimes have confused ideas on their roles and expectations;
* wardens have a distinctive role, probably a wider range of responsibilities than in the UK. This has sometimes led to power struggles;
* it has to be remembered that clergy holding the Bishop’s licence are primarily responsible to the Bishop;
* an information pack is being produced to help chaplaincies in their welcoming of new chaplains and as an aid to bringing their governance into alignment with the rest of the Church of England.

 **Session 2 Communications**

Damian Thwaites, the newly appointed communications officer took the floor and began by outlining the role of the Communications Director and detailing some of his work which includes:

 - giving media advice to the Bishops;

- giving advice on strategic communications on what to, whom to, where to;

- framing a rapid response to traumatic incidents.

He is doing a “deep clean” on the Diocesan website and planning to seek out and encourage “good stories” from the Diocese on its history and from the chaplaincies on interesting activities. He would like every chaplaincy to designate their own communications person, who could provide information.

He then concentrated on giving information about a programme called “A Church Near You”. Ten million pounds had been invested in this programme to help churches have their own free website, which would be hosted by ACNY at no cost to the church concerned.

**Session 3 The First Ever Forum Chrétien Francophone**

Ben Harding, the Chaplain in Lyon, reported on the above event, held in his city from 28 -31 October 2018. There were over 220 delegates present from twenty two denominations and coming from three countries, Belgium, France and Switzerland. The delegates included bishops, priests, pastors, missionaries and Christian organisations. The programme included times of prayer, Bible studies and group meetings to exchange experiences. There was a walkabout on the streets when participants, furnished with information packs, went out to talk to passers-by in the streets. On the final evening there was a service attended by 700 people.

Since the Forum there have been weekly prayer meetings on Thursday mornings.

**Session 4 Brexit**

Andrew Lodge who had talked to the Synod last year (one can but be impressed by the courage of the man) came again. There was little then he could say with certainty and at present (August 2019) there is even less. There are a number of sites in both French and English to update people and a UK government website. People present reported the reactions at different various Prefectures when asking for cartes de sejour, which is strongly advised, and when exchanging their British driving licences for French ones, which are necessary in the case of a no-deal Brexit.

**Session 5 Safeguarding**

At the Archdeaconry Synod two members of the Safeguarding team (Majean Griffith and Katherine Harris) reported on the numbers of those trained. There are eight safeguarding trainers in France (which is the highest number across the Diocese) and 77 people were trained between May 2018 and February 2019. They then described new projects which include:

* The Safeguarding Clinic. Majean Griffith, (the Diocesan Safeguarding Administrator for Training), has begun a **weekly Safeguarding Trainers' Clinic** every Thursday from 9am to 11am (UK-time) which provides an opportunity to discuss training-related issues;
* a new safeguarding officer “Buddying Scheme” to help those safeguarding officers who would like reassurance in what can be a very isolated and demanding role;
* work is nearly completed on a new updated policyto belaunched provisionally in October 2019. It will be much more hands on with checklists etc.

At the Diocesan Synod Andrea Watkins (Diocesan Safeguarding Advisor) and Di Smith (Chair of the Diocesan Safeguarding Advisory Committee) gave further information. There are now six people working in the Safeguarding Team in the Diocesan Office.

They spoke specifically of their investigative work and the liaison work which has developed with police and specialists. There was particular emphasis on the difference between work in the UK and the specific challenges posed by work in the Diocese of Europe. On the continent cases are more complex because one is working over a very wide geographical area with different legal systems. In the UK a case which takes about seven hours effort will entail more like 40 hours work in the Diocese in Europe and often involve the expense of travel and hotels. Time out of the office on case work has to be balanced as well with routine work at home.

The Safeguarding Team see some of the important priorities as:

**-** learning lessons from complex cases;

- developing quality assurance;

- implementing the safeguarding audit which was done 18 months ago;

- recruiting some more independent members.

**Session 6 Diocesan Resources and Strategy**

Andrew Caspari, who is the new Chief Operating Officer of the Diocese (Diocesan Secretary) introduced himself and gave some interesting background information. He comes from a European refugee background and has had a long career with the BBC and senior lay roles in the Church. He outlined the challenges facing the Diocese putting special emphasis on the financial problems and the need for the increase in the quotas for the Common Fund. He pointed out that there had been a review of this policy since the last Synod, but stressed the need for chaplaincies to be fair – to pay as much they reasonably could and not to keep their electoral rolls artificially low.

He seems to be very ready for chaplaincies to contact him and wants to know and understand the pressures they are facing and will try to give support.

**Session 7**

**Business Meeting**

At this meeting the Synod adopted the minutes of the 2018 meeting, received the treasurer’s report and passed the following motion presented by the House of Clergy.

 *Motion from the French Archdeaconry Synod to be sent to Diocesan Synod in Cologne*

The motion read as follows “ The synod proposes the creation of a modular pathway of training for lay people in our diocese, supporting the Strategy “Walking Together in Faith” in order to equip God’s people for a range of authorised ministries recognised across the diocese, or for personal Christian development”

The House of Clergy and House of Laity met separately during the Synod. Following the retirement of Kate Giry-Deloisin after twenty years as Lay Chair, Diane Murray was elected to the position.

**Workshops**

Four workshops were held on Friday. Members of the Synod attended the two they felt would be most helpful.

*1. Social media and Communications* - The workshop looked more closely at the programme of the “Church Near You”. There was a warning about the mis-representation and risks around Facebook and insisted we should be vigilant!

2. S*afeguarding* - Extra info and questions were answered by the two members of the Safeguarding Team from London.

3 *Welcoming the Stranger* -Kirilee Reid, the new Chaplain in Calais, has responsibility for working with refugees and migrants in that town.

4. *GDPR 1* - Now, almost one year after GDPR came into force, the workshop set out to discover what practical issues exist in our Chaplaincies in managing personal data. Using an online voting technology supplied by VoxVote.com, attendees were invited to vote, completely anonymously, on a number of topics relating to the implementation of GDPR.

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